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News Release

For Immediate Release

Victory Band of Veterans Makes Music for All to Enjoy

Program is Therapy for Veteran Patients

DETROIT – The idea for what is now The Victory Band was formed out of a need for a particular type of therapy for Veterans who struggle with various mental illnesses.

“These were Veterans in our Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC),” said Dr. Michelle Abela, a psychologist at the Detroit VA Healthcare System. “In this unique program, we are focused on recovery and rehabilitation, not just treatment. We see everything from PTSD to severe depression and schizophrenia. Eighteen months ago, as staff was brainstorming ways we could help our patients, a Veteran in the program suggested that we start a band. We had been thinking about ways to incorporate music into our program and we knew that music can offer a number of benefits, so this seemed like a good concept.”

The staff in the Mental Health Service knew they needed some musical insight. “That’s when Matt Thomas, Steve Munafo and their Jam for Vets Project stepped in,” said Dr. Abela. “Not only did they help provide the instruments and the music, but they offered to teach some of these great heroes how to play!”

“We heard about the idea to form the Victory Band, and knew we had to get involved,” said Steve Munafo. “The whole idea of helping Veterans cope with their illnesses through music was something I was confident in. I see the positive effects on these guys and it’s so incredibly rewarding.”

Dr. Abela says music can do incredible things for Veterans who are living with illnesses. It has a powerful influence and can help them with their coping skills, stress management, expressing feelings, leadership and team building, just to name a few. "We have seen some amazing changes in these Veterans. They are so enthusiastic when it comes to their twice-a-week rehearsals, along with the opportunity to perform in front of people. It's truly eye-opening."

"We couldn't have 'put the band together', as they say, without the help of Jam for Vets," said Bill Browning, Chief of Voluntary Service and Community Relations at the medical center. "We have a great partnership with this extraordinary organization. They hold performances often here at the medical center, for patients in all of our areas, including hospice and our outpatient clinics."

Daniel Beever, an Army Veteran from Mt. Clemens who served in Germany during Vietnam, made the suggestion to start the band. Beever plays keyboard. "I've made new friends and it's helped me out greatly. And, it makes me happy to entertain my fellow Vets."

The Victory Band will perform again at the Detroit VA Healthcare System on March 3, 2014 at 1:00 p.m. in the medical center atrium.

For more information on the band, visit www.detroit.va.gov. You can also learn more about Jam for Vets by clicking here: <http://www.jamforvets.org/index.html>.

Since 1939, the Detroit VA Healthcare System has been improving the health of the men and women who have so proudly served our nation. In 1996, the medical center moved from Allen Park, Michigan to the current location on John R. in Detroit. One of the newer VA facilities in the country, we consider it our privilege to serve the health care needs of our Veterans. Services are available to more than 330,000 Veterans living in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, and St. Clair counties. This population represents approximately forty-four percent of the Veteran population in the lower peninsula of Michigan. For more information, visit <http://www.detroit.va.gov>.

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